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**Systemic Functional Linguistics Analysis Study of Political Campaign Language  
and the Sustainable Development Goals: How Linguistics Shapes Democratic  
Participation**

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**Abstract**

This study employs a Systemic Functional Linguistics analysis framework to investigate the relationship between political campaign language and its influence on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a particular focus on how linguistic strategies shape democratic participation. By analyzing political discourse through the lens of systemic functional linguistics. The research examines how campaign messages encode agency, actions, and responsibility in relation to the SDGs, thus guiding public perception and engagement. The study highlights the role of language in constructing narratives around global sustainability, empowerment, and social justice, which are central to the SDGs. It analyzes various political speeches, manifestos, and advertisements, focusing on transitivity processes such as material, mental, and relational processes to uncover how political actors align

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themselves with or against the SDGs. Additionally, the study explores how such linguistic choices may either enhance or hinder democratic participation, influencing voter engagement and understanding of sustainable development issues. By combining linguistics with political communication, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how political language shapes public discourse, influences democratic action, and fosters or impedes meaningful participation in achieving the SDGs. The findings underscore the critical role of strategic language in framing political agendas and promoting or constraining sustainable development goals in contemporary democratic societies.

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### **Introduction**

The media plays an important role in shaping the public's perception of political figures, particularly during election campaigns. Candidates' portrayal influences voters' opinions and frame their leadership abilities, moral values, and political decisions (Entman, 2021). In the 2024 U.S. presidential election, The Washington Post and The New York Times, two major newspapers, have big roles in evaluating candidates, such as Joe Biden and Donald Trump, through certain evaluative strategies. By using appraisal theory, particularly judgment of social esteem and social sanction, the study aims to evaluate the language used in the newspapers by dissecting and understanding both candidates' narratives. Appraisal is one of the fundamental frameworks within Systemic Functional Linguistics that offers insights into how language is used to express attitude (Martin & White, 2005). This theory has been applied in various studies of political discourse to reveal media bias and framing. The main focus of this study was judgment analysis, which encompasses evaluations of human behavior through two

primary dimensions: social esteem, which relates to competence, dependability, and leadership, and social sanction, which evaluates moral and ethical conduct (White, 2020). These evaluative judgments are important aspects of media discourse, especially in the context of politics, as they help to shape public perceptions of candidates, highlighting or questioning their competence and ethical integrity (Ekström & Patrona, 2022). Despite prior research on media portrayals of candidates, a gap remains in analyzing social esteem and social sanction specifically within the context of the U.S. presidential elections, where political polarization heightens the need to understand evaluative language. This study holds significant implications for two key reasons. First, it enriches the field of discourse analysis using appraisal theory, such as judgment, one of the subsystems of attitude, to dissect media coverage polarized by the political environment (Cotter, 2021). Second, it carries practical implications for ELT, fostering critical literacy (McGregor & Lawrence, 2020). By dissecting evaluative language in media, students can develop their ability to be critical, as one of the most essential skills in today's media-saturated environment (Leung, 2021). By integrating this knowledge in ELT classrooms, learners can be empowered with skills to discern bias and navigate the intricate evaluative strategies used in political reporting, aligning with broader educational goals in media literacy and political awareness Nanavaratorn in (2025).

In the contemporary political landscape, the pursuit of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has become a central pillar of both national and international policy agendas. Established in 2015, the SDGs comprise 17 global goals designed to address the world's most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges, including poverty eradication, gender equality, and climate action. Governments, political parties, and candidates increasingly draw upon these global goals to legitimize their policy agendas and appeal to electorates concerned with sustainable development. However, translating the SDGs' complex, multifaceted objectives into accessible and persuasive political messages involves significant linguistic and ideological work.

Political campaign language serves as a powerful tool in this process. Beyond merely communicating policy proposals, campaign discourse functions to persuade, mobilize, and align the electorate with a candidate's values and vision. Through selective framing and evaluative language, politicians construct social realities, influence public

perception, and manage consent for particular versions of sustainability and development. As such, the analysis of language used in political campaigns provides valuable insight into how democratic participation and political legitimacy are linguistically constructed within the context of the SDGs.

To explore this phenomenon, the present study draws upon Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), a framework within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) that examines how speakers and writers express evaluation, attitude, and alignment. Appraisal Theory provides the analytical tools necessary to uncover the evaluative meanings embedded in campaign slogans, focusing on how affect (emotions), judgment (ethical or moral evaluation), and appreciation (aesthetic or value assessment) are used to position audiences and shape ideological perspectives. This theoretical lens is particularly relevant to SDG-oriented political discourse, where candidates seek to construct positive self-representation while aligning their platforms with global sustainability narratives.

Previous research has addressed various aspects of political campaign language. For instance, Handono (2017) analyzed the linguistic strategies and implicatures found in public political banners, revealing how conventional and conversational implicatures contribute to persuasive messaging. Despite such contributions, there remains a notable research gap concerning how appraisal resources are employed in political campaign slogans—especially those related to the SDGs. No studies to date have systematically examined how evaluative language functions to represent sustainable development values in political communication. Addressing this gap is crucial for understanding how politicians linguistically construct moral and emotional appeals around global sustainability goals.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the use of Appraisal resources in the political campaign slogans of Iraqi candidates for the 2025 national elections, focusing on how these linguistic strategies reflect candidates' evaluative stances toward the SDGs. By examining affect, judgment, and appreciation in the slogans, this research seeks to reveal the ideological positions and persuasive mechanisms underlying campaign discourse in Iraq.

The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, which, according to (Arikunto,2011), aims to describe and interpret linguistic data systematically based on

theoretical categories. The data consist of ten political campaign slogans representing ten Iraqi candidates for the 2025 elections. These slogans were collected through direct observation of campaign materials displayed in public spaces, following the listening or observation method as described by Sudaryanto (2015). Data were analyzed using the referential pairing method, which interprets linguistic meaning based on external, independent criteria (Sudaryanto, 2015). Each slogan was examined in terms of the attitude system—comprising affect, judgment, and appreciation—within the Appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005), and the findings were presented using the informal descriptive method, employing ordinary language for explanation (Sudaryanto, 2015).

### **Research Problem and Questions**

Despite the prominence of sustainable development discourse in political communication, there is a limited understanding of how linguistic evaluations shape public perceptions of the SDGs. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What types of Appraisal resources (affect, judgment, and appreciation) are employed in the political campaign slogans of Iraqi candidates for the 2025 elections?
2. How do these Appraisal resources construct candidates' evaluative stances toward the Sustainable Development Goals?

### **Significance of the Study**

By emphasizing how language serves as an evaluative and ideological tool in campaign communication, this study adds to the expanding corpus of work on political linguistics analysis. It also provides a prism through which to view the localization of the SDGs in Iraqi political discourse, offering a context-specific insight into how Iraqi politicians linguistically connect with global sustainability narratives. In a broader sense, the results could improve our comprehension of how language mediates political legitimacy and democratic engagement in the age of sustainable development.

### **Research Design & Methodological Framework**

This study adopts a Qualitative-Dominant Mixed Methods design utilizing Systemic Functional Linguistics. It bridges the text-focused mechanisms of SFL with the socially critical goals of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to evaluate how global policy (SDGs) is translated into localized political mobilization.

The core linguistic architecture relies on M.A.K. Halliday’s tripartite model of language metafunctions, mapping specific linguistic choices directly onto the democratic and policy variables of your study:

Table 1.1: Presented Methodological Framework

<b>SFL Metafunction</b>	<b>Linguistic Tool</b>	<b>Analytical Focus in this Study</b>	<b>Political/SDG Outcome</b>
Interpersonal	Appraisal Theory (Martin & White)  • <i>Attitude</i> ( <i>Affect, Judgment, Appreciation</i> )	Emotional appeals, ethical evaluations of leadership, and alignment with SDG values.	Democratic Trust & Legitimacy: How voters are emotionally and morally mobilized.
Interpersonal	Mood & Modality	Choice of clause types (declaratives, imperatives) and modal verbs ( <i>must, should, will</i> ).	Agency & Obligation: Who is responsible for acting on SDGs (the state vs. the citizen).
Ideational	Transitivity System	Process types (Material, Mental, Relational) and participant roles (Actors, Targets).	Policy Representation: How sustainable development actions are framed.

### Literature Review of Media Coverage of Candidates

According to Nanavaratorn (2025), the researcher explored how two major U.S. newspapers, The Washington Post and The New York Times, utilized evaluative language to assess U.S. presidential candidates Joe Biden and Donald Trump during

the 2024 election campaign. Addressing a gap in media bias research within political discourse through the use of appraisal analysis, the study focuses on the judgment of social esteem and social sanction, which investigate how the candidates were portrayed, contributing to discussions on media portrayals that shape public perception. Materials and Methods: Appraisal theory was applied to analyze 35 selected articles from both online newspapers in a span of six months from January to June 2024, specifically examining evaluative language related to social esteem and social sanction. This qualitative study aimed to identify patterns in how each candidate was represented, particularly regarding their leadership, policies, and personal attributes. Results: The findings indicate that both newspapers generally portrayed Biden positively in terms of social esteem, emphasizing his leadership experience, especially in foreign policy. However, as the campaign progressed, negative judgments related to social sanction surfaced, particularly critiquing Biden's age and his handling of domestic issues like immigration. Trump, on the other hand, was portrayed negatively in both newspapers, with an emphasis on social sanction due to his rhetoric and behavior on immigration. Despite this, The Washington Post occasionally acknowledged Trump's resilience, offering him positive evaluations in terms of social esteem. Conclusion: The study contributes to the field of discourse analysis and provides practical implications for English Language Teaching (ELT), highlighting the importance of media critical literacy. Integrating appraisal theory in ELT classrooms can enhance students' analytical skills and awareness of media framing, encouraging a deeper understanding of evaluative language in political discourse. Scholarly interest in how media shapes public perceptions of political candidates has grown, particularly with the rise of digital platforms and increased political polarization. Media framing, by highlighting specific traits of candidates, can strongly influence public perception. This influence is particularly pronounced in elections, where candidates' perceived competence, moral character, and leadership impact voter impressions (Entman, 2021). Publications sometimes emphasize issues related to tone, balance, and framing, all of which shape public perception subtly yet powerfully (Patterson, 2016). Studies on The Washington Post and The New York Times demonstrate how these outlets subtly shape opinions through descriptive language, often guiding perceptions without appearing overtly biased. In 2022, one of the studies found that coverage has particularly focused on

candidates' leadership and moral stances, especially on key issues like healthcare and economic recovery (DeVito, 2022). Language choices, including adjectives and adverbs, can subtly shape the public's view of a candidate's competence and integrity, reflecting the media's underlying influence (Van Dijk, 2013). Although such framing often appears neutral, it can subtly guide readers' perceptions of a candidate's ability to lead. Other researchers argue that these nuanced judgments can have a powerful effect on voters, especially in high-stakes elections where journalistic neutrality is under growing scrutiny (Ridout et al., 2021). Ideological differences exist between The Washington Post and The New York Times, with The Times generally leaning liberal, while The Washington Post often presents a more centrist view. These leanings impact how each outlet assesses candidates' traits, shaping public perceptions in distinct ways.

#### **Analysis: Appraising SDG Framing in Campaign Discourse**

Table 1-2 representative applies the Appraisal analysis of phrases typical of campaign discourse centered on SDG themes. The analysis reveals a consistent and strategic linguistic patterning aimed at fostering alignment and building consensus.

Clauses	Appraisal Analysis (Affect / Judgment / Appreciation)	Related SDGs
Stronger with us, because we believe the future begins with education.	Judgment: expresses a responsible, forward-looking attitude. Appreciation: values education as the key to national strength. Affect: inspires pride and motivation.	SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth
Citizens' rights begin with service (health, electricity, water, and education).	Judgment emphasizes fairness and the state's duty to provide essential services. Appreciation: values equality and access to resources.	SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being, SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities

	Affect: not explicit here, because no emotional tone or feeling words are present.	
We are a nation.	Affect: expresses unity, pride, and belonging. Judgment: reflects stability and collective strength. Appreciation: values nationhood and sovereignty.	SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
We were, we are, and we will remain a nation... We invest in the Iraqi mind to build the nation's future.	Affect: pride and continuity. Judgment: praises effort, perseverance, and national commitment. Appreciation: values knowledge, intellect, and progress.	SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
One Prosperous Iraq for All.	Affect: conveys hope and unity. Judgment: promotes inclusion and equality. Appreciation: values prosperity and social harmony.	SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

The slogans employ emotionally charged and patriotic language to link national development with education, unity, and essential services. The first slogan emphasizes education as the foundation for a stronger future, demonstrating appreciation for learning and a commitment to collective effort. The second slogan emphasizes that basic services and rights form the foundation of citizenship, reflecting the values of justice and equality — ideas closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The simple statement “We are a nation” expresses confidence and unity, reminding people of shared identity and strength. The final slogan connects national pride with

intellectual investment, showing that the country's progress depends on developing human potential. It conveys a hopeful emotional tone (affect), moral commitment (judgment), and deep appreciation of education and innovation.

The slogan “عراق واحد مزدهر للجميع” (One Prosperous Iraq for All) carries a strong message of unity and inclusivity. It emphasizes that prosperity should be shared among all citizens, not limited to specific groups. The emotional tone (affect) is hopeful and uplifting, encouraging collective harmony. The slogan also expresses a moral evaluation (judgment) that equality and national solidarity are the right paths for a strong future. Through appreciation, it values progress and a balanced society — directly relating to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), which both highlight fairness and peaceful coexistence.

Overall, the slogans align strongly with SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), demonstrating how language can be used to promote sustainable national development through emotional appeal and value-based messages.

#### **Transitivity Analysis:**

In Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), transitivity analysis is primarily a qualitative and categorical framework rather than a statistical one based on algebraic equations.

However, to generate a quantitative results breakdown the processes, the study uses a standard relative frequency formula to calculate the percentage of each process type within the corpus.

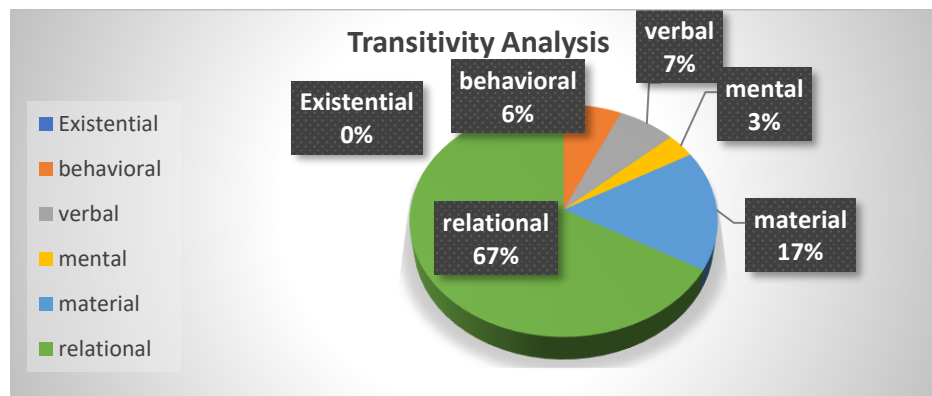
The formula used to calculate the distribution of process types is:

$$P = (F \text{ on } N) \times 100\%$$

#### **Key Variables Explained:**

- (P)  
= The Percentage of a specific process type (e.g., Relational, Material).
- (f)  
= The Frequency (total count) of that specific process type in your data.
- (N)  
= The Total Number of Clauses parsed and coded across the entire analyzed text (the sample size).

Posters represented the election candidates' language as shown in the graph and charts in Figure 1.1.



Based on the pie chart, Relational processes dominate the campaign language at 67%. To arrive at that specific figure, the calculation follows these steps:

1. Segment and Code: You count every single instance where a political or SDG-related clause establishes a state of being, identity, or ownership (e.g., "*Climate change is a global crisis*", Relational Process). Let's assume you found (134) relational clauses.
2. Sum the Entire Corpus (N): You add up all the coded processes found in the text (Existential + Behavioral + Verbal + Mental + Material + Relational). Let's assume the total number of clauses is (200).
3. Run the Calculation:

$$P = ( 134/200 ) \times 100\% = 67\%$$

The candidates' language is most frequently involved in relational processes (67%). The next highest frequency of representation was the material, in which construed times (17%), and verbal processes came as the third frequency times (6%). The fourth process was behavioral process within (6%), the fifth process was mental within (3%), and the last process was the Existential processes with (0%).

Relational processes, a fundamental category within the transitivity system, play a crucial role in academic writing by expressing relationships such as equivalence, classification, or attribution. These processes are typically realized through linking verbs like "is," "represents," or "defines," which connect concepts and clarify meaning. For example, the sentence "Democracy is a system of governance based on popular sovereignty" uses the relational process "is" to define and describe a key concept, making it accessible and precise. Such processes are essential for constructing logical arguments, presenting clear definitions, and maintaining textual coherence. According to Halliday and Martin, relational processes enable the "logical organization of ideas" required for technical and abstract representations in academic texts (Writing Science, pp. 12-14) Relational processes, a fundamental category within the transitivity system, play a crucial role in academic writing by expressing relationships such as equivalence, classification, or attribution. These processes are typically realized through linking verbs like "is," "represents," or "defines," which connect concepts and clarify meaning. For example, the sentence "Democracy is a system of governance based on popular sovereignty" uses the relational process "is" to define and describe a key concept, making it accessible and precise. Such processes are essential for constructing logical arguments, presenting clear definitions, and maintaining textual coherence. According to Halliday and Martin, relational processes enable the "logical organization of ideas" required for technical and abstract representations in academic texts (Writing Science, pp. 12-14).

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1. "Stronger with us"
2. "Because we believe the future begins with education."
3. "Citizens' rights begin with service, health, electricity, water, and education."
4. "We are a nation."
5. "We were, we are, and we will remain a nation..."
6. "We invest in the Iraqi mind to build the nation's future"

In the first sentence, "Stronger with us" uses the relational process. In SFL, relational processes involve being or having something, often represented by the verb "to be" (or its variations). Here, "Stronger" acts as an attribute of the subject (implied subject "we" or "us"), suggesting a state of being. Participants, the implied participant is the subject "we/us" (since the phrase is part of a broader context that implies the speaker is referring to themselves or their group), and the relational process connects "us" to the quality "stronger." Circumstance, 'With us' indicates a circumstance of accompaniment, which tells us who is being described as stronger.

In the second sentence, the Clause: "because we believe the future begins with education", "we believe Process: The verb believe is a mental process, specifically a cognitive process. It indicates the subject's thoughts or beliefs about something. Participants: Senser: "We" (the participants who are thinking or believing). Phenomenon: "The future" (the thing being believed). Circumstance: None here directly, but we can infer that it's about a belief in the future. *"the future begins"* Process: The verb begins is a material process, as it describes an action or happening. In this case, it suggests the initiation of something for the future starting. Participants: Actor: "The future" (the thing that is beginning). Goal: Implied, it's not explicitly stated, but the future "begins with education," so "education" would be considered the goal of the action. Circumstance: Not explicitly stated, but the phrase "with education" functions as a circumstantial modifier indicating the means or source of the beginning of the future. *"with education"* Process: This phrase is part of the material process

("begins"), but it specifically adds the circumstance of means. "Education" here is what the future "begins with," implying that education is the force or the cause behind the future's initiation. Participants: "Education" acts as the means or instrument by which the future begins.

In the third sentence, "Citizens' rights begin with service, health, electricity, water, and education." Process: The process here is "begin", which is a relational process (a type of process that links the subject to a complement or attribute). This is the main action or event in the sentence. Participants: S (Subject): "Citizens' rights" The rights of citizens are the participants here, and they are the subject of the sentence. This shows that the rights are initiating something or starting a state. Actor: The sentence doesn't explicitly contain an Actor in terms of an entity performing an action on another. However, in this relational clause, the Actor is implied to be the rights themselves (i.e., the rights initiate the process of beginning). Complement (Circumstantial Elements): "service, health, electricity, water, and education". These are the resources or attributes associated with the rights. These elements describe what rights begin with or are tied to, and they represent different areas of basic social infrastructure, like services provided to citizens. Transitivity in the Context of the Process "Begin" is a relational process, which links the subject ("Citizens' rights") to the complement ("service, health, electricity, water, and education"). The process doesn't involve a direct action on an object but rather a state of being or initiation. The circumstantial elements (service, health, electricity, water, education) are the attributes that define what "Citizens' rights" are. These five elements are presented as key components or foundational rights, marking what "rights" begin with, i.e., the things citizens are entitled to types of Participants in Transitivity Terms. In terms of participants, we can identify: Agent (involvement in the process): In this clause, there is no explicit agent, but we can infer that citizens are the implied agents whose rights are being referenced. Goal (the end-point or outcome of the process): The rights themselves are being connected to the various services. Attribute (what is being assigned to the subject): The services (health, education, etc.) are the attributes associated with citizens' rights.

In the four sentence, "We are a nation" using Transitivity theory, the Relational process. The verb "are" (a form of "to be") is a relational process. Relational processes link a

subject to a complement that provides additional information about the subject, typically describing its identity, state, or characteristics. Participants Subject (S): "We" This is the subject of the clause. "We" refers to the group or collective entity, which could be people, a society, or a community. In this case, "we" represents a group (likely citizens or members of a nation). Complement (C): "a nation" This is the complement of the verb "are" and provides more information about the subject. It tells us what "we" are. In this case, "a nation" is the identity or state of the subject "we." It defines or characterizes what the group (the subject) is Transitivity Analysis in Transitivity terms: Process: "are" (a relational process that links the subject to the complement). Participants: Subject (S): "We" (the group or entity being described). Complement (C): "a nation" (the identity or characteristic of "we").

This is a simple equative clause, where the subject ("we") is equated to the complement ("a nation"). No direct action or process is being done to or by another participant, as we would find in material or mental processes. Instead, the process is purely linking the subject to a state of being. Transitivity in Context This sentence expresses a relational identification, meaning it states that the entity represented by "we" is identified as "a nation." There's no action or dynamic happening between different participants as in material processes (e.g., "We built a house"). The only relational aspect here is the linking of "we" to "a nation."

In the five sentence: "We were, we are, and we will remain a nation..." This part consists of three linked clauses: "We were a nation", "We are a nation", and "We will remain a nation". Each clause involves a relational process with the subject ("We") linked to the complement ("a nation"), indicating a state of being. Process: "were," "are," and "will remain": These are all relational processes (a state of being or identity). "were" is in the past tense. "are" is in the present tense. "will remain" is in the future tense, indicating continuity. Participants: Subject (S): "We" The subject "We" refers to a group or collective entity (likely citizens or a nation). This participant is being described or identified in each clause. Complement (C): "a nation" The complement is "a nation", which represents the identity or state of "we" in all three temporal aspects (past, present, and future). It tells us what the subject "we" are at different points in time. Each clause expresses relational identification through different time frames: The subject "We" is linked to the complement "a nation" through a

relational process of being in the past, present, and future. There is no direct action or object involved in these clauses; they simply identify the subject as being a nation, emphasizing continuity over time.

In sentence six: "We invest in the Iraqi mind to build the nation's future". This is a single clause with two parts: "We invest in the Iraqi mind" "to build the nation's future" (a purpose clause explaining the reason for investing). Process: "invest": This is a material process (a process of doing, where something is acted upon). "build": This is another material process, describing an action of creating or constructing something.

Participants: Subject (S): "We"

The subject "We" refers to the group or collective entity performing the actions of investing and building. Actor (A): "We"

In the material processes "invest" and "build," "we" are the actors carrying out these actions. Goal (G): In the first part, "the Iraqi mind" is the goal of the action "invest."

This is the entity or concept that "we" are investing in. In the second part, "the nation's future" is the goal of the action "build." This is what is being created or constructed.

Circumstantial: "in the Iraqi mind" and "to build the nation's future": "in the Iraqi mind" provides the location or goal for the investment. "to build the nation's future" is a purpose clause explaining the intended outcome or reason behind the investment.

Analysis: "Invest" and "build" are material processes, indicating action or doing. The actor "We" performs both actions, with the goal being "the Iraqi mind" (in the case of investment) and "the nation's future" (in the case of building). The purpose of the investment is clearly to "build the nation's future", linking the two actions with a goal-oriented purpose.

### **Findings and discussion of Appraisal analysis**

The findings present the concrete results of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) analysis applied to the analyzed political slogans:

Linguistic Mechanisms: The slogans rely heavily on emotionally charged, patriotic, and value-based language. This is structurally achieved through three core layers of the Appraisal System:

Affect (Emotional Tone): The language conveys a hopeful, uplifting, and confident tone (e.g., the simple statement "*We are a nation*" expresses confidence and unity).

Judgment (Moral Commitment): The slogans express a clear moral evaluation that national solidarity, equality, and collective effort are the ethically "right" paths forward.

Appreciation (Valuation): There is a deep appreciation of education, innovation, progress, intellectual investment, and a balanced society. Thematic Core: Slogans like "عراق واحد مزدهر للجميع" (One Prosperous Iraq for All) explicitly prioritize message pillars of unity, inclusivity, shared prosperity, and citizenship rights.

SDG Mapping: The corpus directly aligns with four specific United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:

SDG 4 (Quality Education): Framed as the foundation for a stronger future and intellectual investment.

SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth): Tied to national development and progress.

SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities): Promoted through messages of shared prosperity for all citizens rather than exclusive groups.

SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions): Reflected in the core values of justice, equality, fairness, and peaceful coexistence.

The discussion interprets *how* and *why* these linguistic patterns shape democratic participation and campaign rhetoric in the context of the SDGs.

### **Rhetorical Construction of National Identity**

The findings show that political language deliberately fuses national development with individual rights. By using inclusive, high-affect phrasing like "*We are a nation*," the rhetoric moves away from partisan division and instead manufactures a unified civic identity. This creates an emotional contract with the voter, framing democratic participation not just as a political choice, but as a patriotic duty to collective harmony.

### **Localization of Global Policy (The SDGs)**

A major challenge of the SDGs is that they are often viewed as abstract, bureaucratic global targets. The data demonstrates how campaign language successfully localizes global policy. By translating complex institutional goals (like SDG 10 and 16) into accessible, value-laden slogans centered on "fairness," "basic services," and "prosperity

for all," political actors bridge the gap between international sustainability standards and the immediate everyday aspirations of local citizens.

### **SFL Metafunctional Impact on Democratic Mobilization**

From an SFL perspective, the heavy reliance on *Affect* and *Judgment* over purely transactional policy statements is a deliberate rhetorical strategy. Rather than detailing the structural mechanics of economic growth or institutional reform, the language leverages interpersonal metafunctions to build moral authority. By linking progress directly to "intellectual investment" (SDG 4) and "justice" (SDG 16), the slogans seek to gain democratic legitimacy through ethical alignment and shared values, effectively using language as a tool to inspire collective hope and drive national mobilization.

### **The findings and analysis of the transitivity analysis**

The transitivity analysis of the political campaign corpus reveals a stark hierarchy in the choice of process types, demonstrating a heavily skewed distribution toward abstract and existential framing rather than physical action:

Relational Processes (67%): Dominating more than two-thirds of the entire corpus, this is the primary linguistic choice utilized by the candidates. Material Processes (17%): Actions involving physical, concrete doings or policy executions represent the second highest frequency, though they trail significantly behind relational processes. Verbal Processes (6%): Activities of saying, praising, or commanding constitute a minor portion of the text. Behavioral Processes (6%): Processes representing physiological or psychological behaviors match the frequency of verbal processes. Mental Processes (3%): Verbs of thinking, feeling, or perceiving are minimally represented. Existential Processes (0%): The absolute absence of existential processes shows that candidates do not focus on merely stating the existence of phenomena without attributing a relationship or identity to them.

The statistical dominance of certain transitivity processes over others offers profound insights into how campaign language functions as a tool for political mobilization and policy translation.

### **The Domination of Being Over Doing (Relational vs. Material)**

The most striking finding is the wide gap between Relational processes (67\%) and Material processes (17\%). In SFL, Relational processes are used to characterize, identify, and establish states of being (e.g., "*Our country is strong,*" "*Education is a fundamental right*"). Conversely, Material processes construe concrete physical actions (e.g., "*We will build schools,*" "*We allocated funds*").

This distribution reveals that the campaign language is overwhelmingly ideological rather than transactional. Instead of detailing *how* the Sustainable Development Goals will be logistically implemented through policy actions (Material), candidates prioritize *defining the reality* of the nation and *establishing moral values* (Relational). The language seeks to build consensus on "who we are" and "what we stand for" as a prerequisite for democratic engagement.

### **Ideological Scaffolding for the SDGs**

By leaning so heavily on Relational processes (67\%), candidates effectively turn the abstract, global targets of the SDGs into absolute national truths. When a candidate uses an identifying or attributive relational clause regarding sustainability, it frames the SDGs not as a set of complex, optional legislations, but as inherent components of the national identity. This establishes a powerful ideological framework: to support the candidate's vision of the state is to inherently support the values of justice, equality, and development embedded within the SDGs.

### **The Marginalization of Agency (Verbal, Behavioral, Mental)**

The low frequencies of Verbal (6\%), Behavioral (6\%), and Mental (3\%) processes indicate that the rhetoric minimizes individual cognitive or communicative processes. The campaign language is not structured around individual reflection or dialogue; instead, it utilizes a highly authoritative stance.

Furthermore, the complete absence of Existential processes (0\%) proves that candidates do not merely introduce problems or realities into the discourse passively (e.g., "*There is poverty*"). Instead, by converting potential existential statements into relational statements (e.g., "*Poverty is an injustice we must conquer*"), they instantly assign political and moral blame, which serves as a highly effective mechanism for rallying democratic participation.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the analyzed slogans demonstrate how attitude is strategically constructed through language to promote the values of the Sustainable Development Goals. By combining emotional appeal (affect), moral judgment, and appreciation, the slogans foster positive attitudes toward education, equality, unity, and national responsibility. Patriotic and inclusive expressions strengthen collective identity and encourage citizens to view education, justice, and equal access to services as essential foundations for national progress. The slogan “One Prosperous Iraq for All” particularly reinforces attitudes of inclusivity and shared responsibility, aligning closely with SDGs related to quality education, reduced inequalities, economic growth, and strong institutions. Overall, the analysis highlights that language is a powerful tool in shaping public attitudes and motivating collective commitment to sustainable and inclusive development. As well as the results indicate that the candidates’ language is predominantly characterized by relational processes, which account for the highest proportion (67%). This suggests a strong emphasis on defining identities, attributes, and relationships rather than focusing on actions or events. Material processes constitute the second most frequent category (17%), reflecting a moderate tendency to describe actions and concrete activities. Verbal and behavioral processes follow equally at 6% each, indicating limited attention to acts of communication and observable behaviors. Mental processes appear infrequently (3%), suggesting minimal representation of thoughts, feelings, or perceptions. Notably, existential processes are entirely absent (0%), implying that the candidates’ discourse does not focus on expressing existence or occurrence. Overall, these findings reveal a discourse pattern that prioritizes description and attribution over action, cognition, and experiential representation.

## **Recommendations for future studies**

Diachronic (Time-Based) Analysis: Future studies should conduct longitudinal research comparing political campaign language across different election cycles (e.g., comparing early SDG implementation years to the post-2026 climate landscape). This would reveal whether political parties are progressively internalizing sustainability

goals into their core rhetoric or if its usage fluctuates strictly based on immediate electoral opportunism.

Multimodal Functional Analysis (MDA): Political campaigns do not rely on text alone. Future research should expand the SFL framework to include Visual Grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen). Analyzing how text interacts with imagery, body language, and stage design in campaign videos and social media posts would provide a more holistic understanding of how democratic engagement is manufactured. Mixed-Methods Reception Studies: While SFL perfectly decodes the *intended* meaning of the text, it cannot measure actual reader reception. Future projects could combine SFL textual analysis with focus groups or public surveys to measure if high-frequency Relational processes (67\%) actually succeed in inspiring democratic trust and civic participation among voters.

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### Abstract in Arabic

توظف هذه الدراسة إطار التحليل في اللسانيات الوظيفية النظامية لدراسة العلاقة بين لغة الحملات السياسية ، مع تركيز خاص على كيفية إسهام الاستراتيجيات اللغوية في (SDGs) وتأثيرها في أهداف التنمية المستدامة تشكيل المشاركة الديمقراطية. ومن خلال تحليل الخطاب السياسي من منظور اللسانيات الوظيفية النظامية، تبحث الدراسة في كيفية ترميز رسائل الحملات لمفاهيم الفاعلية والأفعال والمسؤولية فيما يتعلق بأهداف التنمية المستدامة، وبذلك توجه إدراك الجمهور ومستوى انخراطه وتسلط الدراسة الضوء على دور اللغة في بناء السرديات المرتبطة بالاستدامة العالمية، والتمكين، والعدالة الاجتماعية، وهي مفاهيم محورية في أهداف التنمية المستدامة. كما تحلل مجموعة من الخطب السياسية، والبرامج الانتخابية، والإعلانات، مع التركيز على عمليات التعدي مثل العمليات المادية والذهنية والعلاقية، للكشف عن كيفية موازنة الفاعلين السياسيين أنفسهم مع أهداف التنمية المستدامة أو معارضتهم لها إضافة إلى ذلك، تستكشف الدراسة كيف يمكن لهذه الاختيارات اللغوية أن تعزز المشاركة الديمقراطية أو تعيقها، من خلال تأثيرها في تفاعل الناخبين وفهمهم لقضايا التنمية المستدامة. ومن خلال الجمع بين اللسانيات والاتصال السياسي، تسهم الدراسة في تعميق الفهم لكيفية تشكيل اللغة السياسية للخطاب العام، وتأثيرها في الفعل الديمقراطي، ودورها في تعزيز أو إعاقة المشاركة الفاعلة في تحقيق أهداف التنمية المستدامة. وتؤكد النتائج الدور الحاسم للغة الاستراتيجية في تأطير الأجندات السياسية، وفي دعم أو تقييد أهداف التنمية المستدامة في المجتمعات الديمقراطية المعاصرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغويات الوظيفية النظامية، الحملة السياسية وأهداف التنمية المستدامة.